

QUICK INFORMATION SERIES

AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSIONARY UNION

JAPAN

1. The Country



JAPAN, the island kingdom of the far East, is a beautiful country. More than thirteen hundred years ago a Japanese poet wrote:—

Japan is not a land where men need pray,
For 'tis itself divine.

The empire consists of four large islands and many hundred small ones. In area it is not larger than the state of California, but the islands extend through fifteen degrees of latitude, from thirty to forty-five, about the same as from southern Georgia to northern Maine.

The climate of Japan varies more from north to south than even its range of latitude would indicate, but throughout the greater portion it is temperate and mild.

The scenery is diversified and delightful. There are rugged mountains, of which the sacred and picturesque Fujiyama is the most famous; quiet valleys, tranquil lakes, and inland seas dotted with thousands of islands. The soil is fertile, brought to a high degree of cultivation by ancient methods; and gardens glow with chrysanthemums, cherry blossoms, and the magnificent lotus flowers.

2. The People

The population of Japan is about 49,000,000. The people are small in stature, but vigorous and active. In the wilds

of Yezo there are still a few thousand Ainus, a tall and hairy race of savages, supposed to be the remnants of aboriginal tribes.

The Japanese are intelligent, but in many respects a race of children, easily interested in new things, but quickly tiring of them. They are kindly and courteous, but deficient in *moral* courage and earnestness.

Nowhere are good manners and artistic culture so widespread as in Japan. These characteristics are found even among the lowest, and they deceive careless observers in regard to the lack of moral principle in Japanese life.

The condition of women is better than in most Asiatic countries, but there is no true chivalry towards them. Japan is the paradise of children; they are welcomed, loved, and tenderly cared for, and have much liberty.

In history, Japan is very ancient. The present dynasty was founded 660 years B. C., and the reigning mikado is the one hundred and twenty-first of his line.

3. Religions

If Paul should go to Kyoto today, his spirit might be stirred within him even more than it was at Athens when he beheld the city full of idols. In one temple at Kyoto there are 33,333 gilded images.

Shintoism

The ancient and state religion of Japan is Shintoism. In its pure form there is no moral or doctrinal code, no priestcraft or idol worship. Certain forces and objects in nature are worshiped; and heroes, emperors, and great men are deified. The mikado is held to be descended from the sun goddess, Amaterasu.

Buddhism

The popular religion of Japan is Buddhism, which was introduced in about 560 A. D., and for many centuries it was united with Shintoism. The teachings of Confucius are also extensively followed, and Buddhist priests often take their texts from the words of the Chinese philosopher.

Popular Buddhism has temples and idols without number, and every home has its idol shelf. A young priest was converted at one of our missions, and this is what he said: "Why then did I throw away Buddhism? The teaching of Buddha is higher philosophy than any other science, but it is never religion. If we take away the philosophic parts there is nothing left; there is no relation between Buddha and us. He has no power to create the world or to save us."

4. Early Missions

In 1549 Francis Xavier, the Catholic "Apostle of the Indies," landed in Japan with an ambition to convert the empire. His work was attended with marvelous success, and the mission flourished for more than a hundred years. Then a great and bloody persecution arose, many became martyrs for the faith, and the priests were expelled.

5. The Turn of the Key

For more than 200 years after the Jesuits were expelled Japan remained a hermit nation; every port was closed to foreigners, and there was a deadly edict against Christianity. But in July, 1853, Commodore M. C. Perry sailed to Japan with a fleet of United States warships, and demanded a treaty and an open port. On Sunday the people saw the capstan of the "Mississippi" wreathed with the stars and stripes, and a Bible laid upon it, while the crew, led by the band, sang: —

Before Jehovah's awful throne
Ye nations bow with solemn joy.

A Japanese writer said of this event, "It was the turn of the key which opened the doors of the Japanese Empire; there first gleamed the rays of her new era of progress."

6. Baptist Missions

In Commodore Perry's expedition was a seaman, Jonathan Goble. He was so impressed by what he saw that he longed to go back and preach the gospel in Japan, and he was sent out in 1860 by the American Baptist Free Mission Society. He continued alone in the work until the mission was accepted by the Missionary Union in 1872.

Special Conditions

All mission work in Japan has been affected, sometimes favorably, sometimes unfavorably, by the rapid changes there during the last 50 years. It has seemed at times as if the nation rushed to the acceptance of Western ideas. The leaders introduced in turn the religion, the education, the political institutions, the militarism, and the commerce of other nations, but without knowledge or experience. Yet great progress in all these things has been made.

True Progress

The progress of our mission amid all these changes has been steady and substantial. It has suffered less than some others from the fluctuations in the attitude of the Japanese toward Christianity. Statistics for 1903 show that we have in Japan 9 stations, 58 missionaries, and 33 churches, with 2,151 members. A special phase of the work is that of the gospel ship, "Fukuin Maru," that sails among the myriad islands of the inland sea. The work of our schools is excellent, and for higher education we have Duncan Academy at Tokyo, and the Baptist Theological Seminary at Yokohama.

This Same Jesus

"I have the charge of thousands of men," said a Japanese railway contractor. "I do everything in my power to awaken their sense of honor; but the only men that I can trust without watching are those who have accepted the Jesus teaching."

"The new century marks the beginning of a new era in the churches of Japan. A tidal wave of gospel preaching has swept over the land, and thousands have heard and believed."

Contributions for the work of the American Baptist Missionary Union may be sent to any of the District Secretaries, or to the Treasurer, Mr. Chas. W. Perkins, Tremont Temple, Boston, Mass.

Address the Literature Department, American Baptist Missionary Union, Tremont Temple, Boston, Mass., for the following:—

Extra copies of this leaflet for free distribution.

An historical leaflet on "Missions in Japan." Price, 5 cents.

A free catalogue giving a list of general literature on Japan.

A copy of the Annual Report (postage 5 cents) and the Handbook of the Missionary Union, both of which give the latest statistics, and are essential to the most intelligent knowledge of our work and workers.